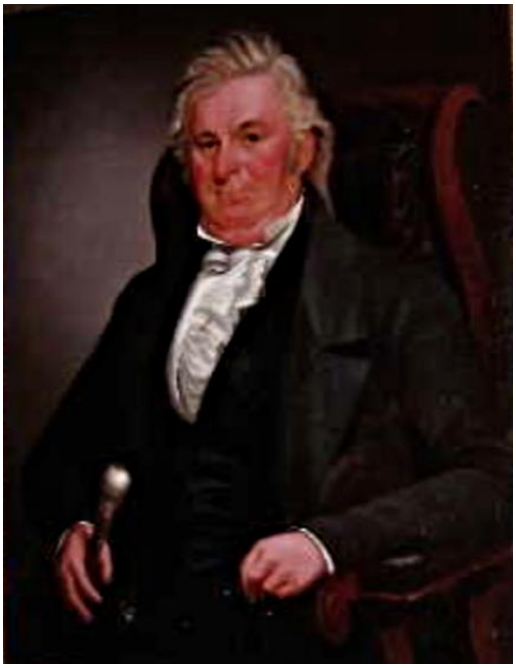
Lemuel Pomeroy



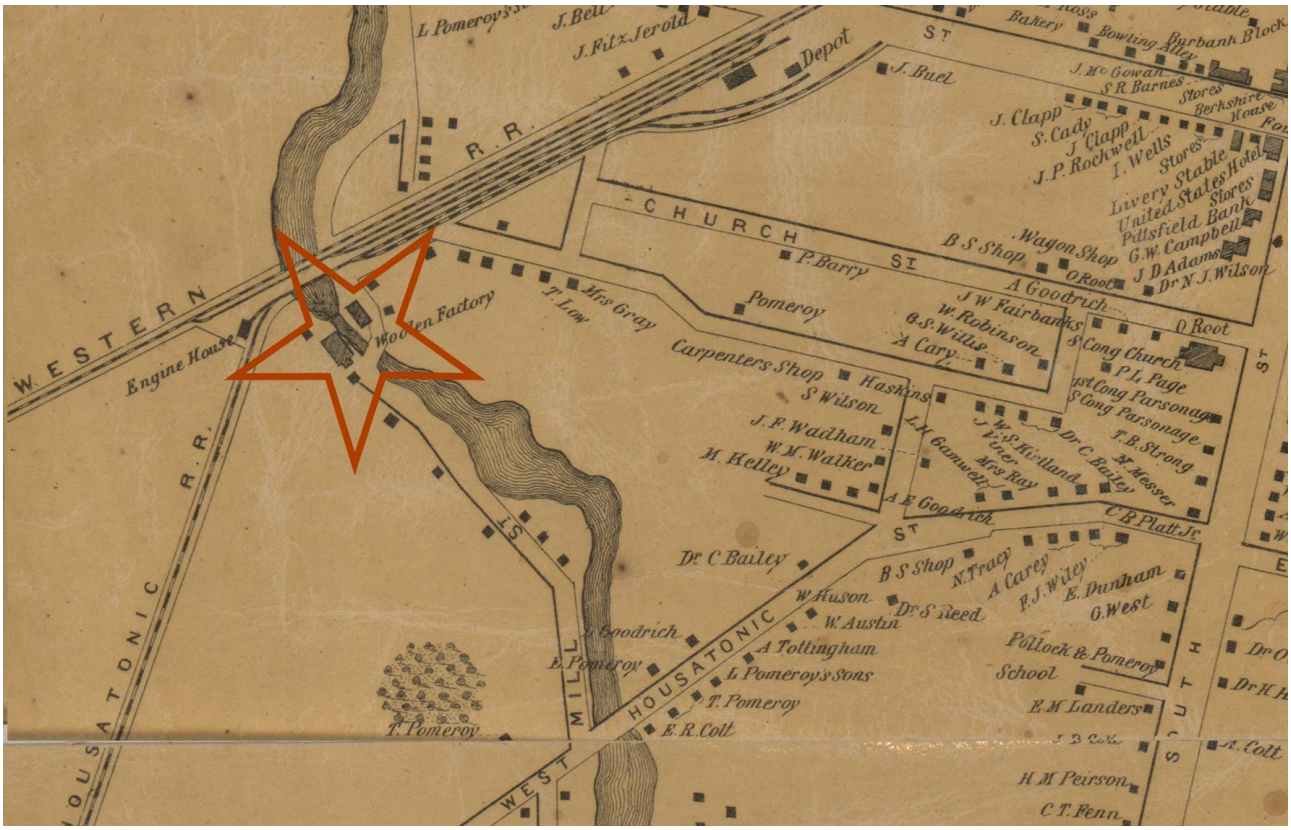
Industrialist

Written by Peter H White

Lemuel Pomeroy was born in Southampton Massachusetts, August 18, 1778. He was the grandson of Gen. Seth Pomeroy who was a blacksmith and gunsmith who fought at the battle of Bunker Hill as one of the only men from Northampton Massachusetts to fight in that conflict. In about 1799, with but a common school education, he left his father's house with the principles of honesty and piety instilled into his mind and heart as his only capital, to carve his own way through life. Making his home in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, he established a manufactory of plows and sleighs. In 1805 the plant was destroyed by fire and rebuilt. In 1809, he established a musket factory there, in which he manufactured arms for the United States. For thirty-seven years he continued this business, without ever having a jar with Government, or a word of dissatisfaction.

In 1812, when everything was uncertain at the beginning of the war, he also began to manufacture woolen goods in Pittsfield. One of the earliest in the country to engaged in this enterprise, an act was passed February 18, 1814, incorporating the Pittsfield Woolen and Cotton Factory, which was probably the pioneer manufactory in Berkshire county. The factory became distinguished for its numerous and extensive manufactories of woolen cloth. This Act constituted Lemuel Pomeroy, Joseph Merrick, Ebenezer Center, Samuel D. Colt, David Campbell, and others a corporation, limiting their ownership of real estate to $30,000, and of personal estate to $100,000; and at the first meeting of the corporators, it

was voted that the stock consist of one hundred and thirty shares of $1,000 each. His sons, Theodore and Robert Pomeroy, joined him and continued the business established by their father for many years.



The location of their water power and factory in 1858.

Lemuel came to Pittsfield skilled in the manufacture of iron tools and gunsmithing work, being the 7th generation of blacksmiths in America. From the time of the Pomeroy's coming to the New England Colonies in 1630, the family has worked as blacksmiths and gunsmiths.

Eltweed Pomeroy born in 1585 at Beaminster, County Dorset, England, came to the new world during the Great Puritan Migration in 1630 as a gunsmith/blacksmith and worked in Dorchester, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. In 1670, he was then listed as a gunsmith at Windsor, Hartford County, Connecticut. In 1671, he was listed with his son Medad in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Medad Pomeroy was born in 1638 at Windsor Connecticut and learned the gunsmith trade with his father there. In 1659, Medad removed to Northampton Massachusetts where he work at John Webbs blacksmith shop. His skill was noticed, and the town purchased the blacksmithing tools from Webb and made a deal with Medad to supply blacksmithing to the town for the ownership of the tools and land. John Webb was retiring from the trade, and Medad was there at the right time and place.

The Pomeroy family heirloom being Medad Pomeroy's anvil handed down through generations.

Major Ebenezer, son of Medad Pomeroy, was born in 1669 at Northampton, Massachusetts. He worked as a gunsmith in the family business. Ebenezer purchased much land and would eventually deed much of it to family members.

Ebenezer's son was General Seth Pomeroy who was born at Northampton in 1706. He was also a gunsmith in the family business, and made famous as one of the only, if not only, person from Northampton who fought at the battle of Bunker Hill.

Captain Lemuel Pomeroy, son of General Seth Pomeroy, was born at Northampton in 1738. and worked in the family gunsmith business. He was a Captain of the Southampton troops during the Revolutionary War. Southampton was taken from the southern part of Northampton and incorporated in 1773. Captain Lemuel Pomeroy became involved in government after the Revolutionary War.

Lemuel Pomeroy Jr. was born at Southampton in 1778. He came to Pittsfield, Massachusetts about 1800 and owned a shop where Butler Bement carried on his business as a gold & silversmith. Lemuel started making plows, sleighs, coaches and firearms.

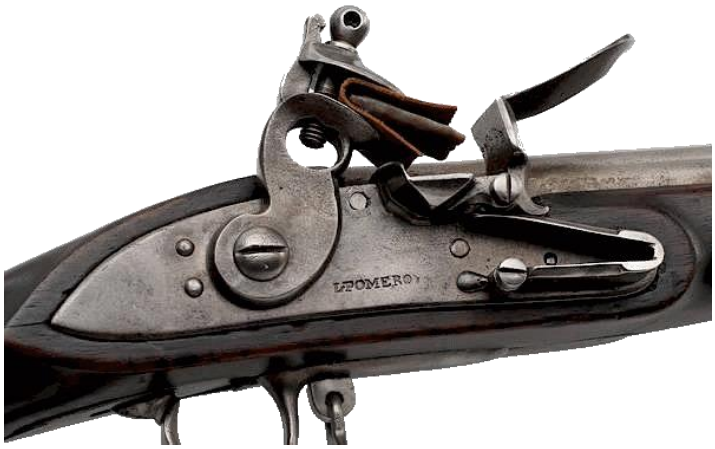
As stated above, he also established a woolen and cotton manufactory that he and his sons also operated for many years to follow.

On the 26th of February 1840, the Secretary of War had catered into a formal contract with an individual by the name of Lemuel Pomeroy, for the manufacture of 6,000 model muskets, deliverable in five years, by installments of 1,200 each. The contract in this case was adopted as a model contract. Your petitioner is prepared to prove that, mutatis mutandis, it was in form and substance adopted in all cases of contract for the manufacture of the model musket ; but especially will he also be able to prove that in his case a contract precisely similar, mutatis mutandis, was drawn up by direction of the lieutenant colonel of ordnance, submitted to your petitioner, and approved by him. It was ready, and about to be signed by both contracting parties, when, at the instigation of the lieutenant colonel of ordnance, its signature was postponed. He expressed a desire to enlarge the contract of your petitioner as to the number of muskets to be manufactured by him and declared his belief that a larger number

would be given to your petitioner; when that should be the case the contract, including such increased number, could be finally signed. No other alteration was proposed, and that alteration was for the benefit of your petitioner.

The contract thus written out has been lost or mislaid, but the afore mentioned contract with Pomeroy, of which it was a copy, is extant. It will be seen, by reference to the documents herewith filed as a part of this petition, and already referred to, and on the third page thereof. The 4th article, being that which sets forth the obligations of the United States to the contractor, is in these words, viz :

"Fourth. It is agreed, that the United States shall pay to the said Lemuel Pomeroy $12 50 for each of said muskets complete. It is, however, provided that when the actual cost of manufacturing muskets at the public armories shall be satisfactorily ascertained, that then the said Lemuel Pomeroy shall be entitled to receive from the United States for each of the said 6,000 muskets the same sum which the actual cost of manufacturing a musket in the Springfield armory shall amount to, in lieu of the $12 50 aforesaid, the said average cost to be ascertained within two years from the date hereof ; it being fully understood by the respective parties to this agreement, that the interest on the entire capital employed at the Springfield armory, insurance against all risk, with the addition of such further per centage for wear and decay as shall be sufficient to preserve said capital unimpaired, shall be charged as making a part of the cost of manufacturing arms at the United States armories."



Pictured above is a distinctive early specimen of the so-called Model 1808 contract musket made by L. Pomeroy & Company of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. This type of state contract musket, often referred to as the ‘transitional Model 1795 and Model 808 contract’ designation, holds no position in the early musket development / production of the US government. During that time mentioned, private arms contractors supplied the government needs with variations of the so-called Charleville Pattern musket in America. Lemuel Pomeroy gained his first government contract for muskets in mid-1816 and became a prolific maker of these long arms, devoting his entire production to various state contracts, i.e. Massachusetts and the State of New York.

In 1820, the percussion cap replaced the flintlock musket mechanism. Pictured below is a Lemuel Pomeroy model flintlock converted to a newer percussion cap model that the conversion was contracted by the US Government.

A converted Pomeroy flintlock musket to the new percussion cap mechanism.

THE LIVINGSTON IRON WORKS

ANCRAM, NEW YORK

In about 1835, in support of his iron work and contracts with the new American Government, Lemuel Pomeroy operated the Livingston foundry for a period of about ten years. Previous to Lemuel's years at the forge, Ancram New York was named Livingston Forge and was an important munitions forge during the Revolutionary War. The forge produced shot, cannonballs, and perhaps most importantly, the huge chain which was installed across the Hudson River at West Point as a defense against British ships going upriver. The "Fort Montgomery Chain" was worked up in 1776 at the Livingston foundry and placed across the Hudson River near West Point between Fort Montgomery and Fort Clinton. On October 6, 1777, British forces attacked the two forts, choosing to outflank the forts on land rather than test the strength of the chain directly. It is believed that the chain was confiscated by the British forces when they retreated from the fort several weeks later. Its whereabouts is unknown but one prominent British historian surmises it was shipped to Gibraltar to defend shipping in that British colony. The town was founded in 1803 and was originally part of Gallatin. In 1814 Ancram separated from Gallatin and became an independent town. The name was derived from the Livingston homestead in Anchoram, Scotland. Robert Livingston, first Lord of the Manor was the son of a Scotch clergyman, born in Anchoram, Scotland in 1654. The town comprises 27,000 of the total 160,000 acres the Livingston family had held from the initial grant by the English Crown in 1686. Philip Livingston, grandson of Robert Livingston, founded the first iron works in 1743, the only one of its kind on the banks of the Roeliff Jansen Kill and in the New York Colony. There were four forges, a blast furnace and a refinery forge that employed 75 to 100 men at full operation. Three iron mines and a lead mine supported the iron works.

COPAKE IRON WORKS

COPAKE, NEW YORK

Lemuel Pomeroy & Sons first established the Copake Iron Works in the year 1845. The firm was composed of Lemuel Pomeroy, Sr., Lemuel Pomeroy, Jr., Robert Pomeroy, and Theodore Pomeroy. Being attracted by the large bed of fine ore and the excellent water-power, decided to come here and build a new furnace. They immediately erected the necessary buildings and commenced the first blast in 1846. The capacity of this furnace was some fifty or sixty tons per month. In 1848 the "Copake Iron Company" was formed by the admission of Isaac C. Chesbrough and William L. Pomeroy as members of the firm. An interest in the business was soon after sold to "Hathaway & Johnson," of South Adams, Mass. In 1850, after Lemuel Sr. died, the firm was again reorganized, and Lemuel Pomeroy, Jr., Isaac C. Chesbrough, Robert Pomeroy, and Theodore Pomeroy became the owners. In 1853, Lemuel Pomeroy, Jr., the son of this subject, died. The other three partners continued the business until 1861, when they sold to John Beckley, of Canaan, Conn.

Work has been done to stabilize, restore and protect the Copake Iron Works and in 2016, the Copake Iron Works was designated a National Heritage Area and is located in the Copake Falls Taconic State Park, 253 State Route 344, Copake Falls, NY

The expanded Copake Iron Works museum is open weekend days from 2pm to 4pm Memorial Day weekend through mid-November. Hours coincide with those of the nearby Roeliff Jansen Historical Society. The diorama room in the museum is open year-round during daylight hours and can be incorporated into a 3-mile interpreted walking tour of the Copake Iron Works Historic District.

Taconic State Park Copake Iron Works Historic Site Museum Photo by Chester Gehman

Taconic State Park Copake Iron Works Historic Site restored furnace Photo by John Reidy

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Speaking of Lemuel Pomeroy Sr., "Mr. Pomeroy," says the Rev. John Todd, who knew him well, "was a gentleman of the old school, and in manner few are or can be more courteous, affable, or agreeable—a politeness not learned in the French school, but which sprang fresh from an expanded and warm heart. In hospitality, at his own house, he was indeed princely. The Dumber who have received a fascinating and warm welcome there, and have shared in a hospitality the most bountiful, is very great indeed, from every part of the land.

"In his business engagements he was honest, liberal, and prompt, universally beloved by all in his employment. He was a most public-spirited citizen and wielded an influence almost unbounded among his fellow-citizens."'